

USINT Havana Commemorates Black History Month 2009



USINT Havana commemorated Black History Month on February 27 with a multi-media cultural event that drew on the participation of the mission's civil society activists, prominent Afro-Cuban contacts, personnel from other embassies, and its own officers. Chief of Mission Jonathan Farrar, who hosted the event, noted that this year's guests were privileged to be part of history: This Black History Month also celebrated the 200th anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's

birth and the election of the first African-American president in U.S. history, Barack Obama. The program's title, "From Harlem to Havana via Colombia and Puerto Rico", was very much in line with this year's BHM theme, "The Quest for Black Citizenship in the Americas," and featured poems by Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou (U.S.), Luis Palés Matos (Puerto Rico), and Nicolás Guillén (Cuba), among many others. Colombian dancers performed to music and poetry from their country, and an Afro-Cuban academic talked about the crucial role played by social clubs known as "societies of color" in pre-revolutionary Cuba. USINT had to improvise when both bands contracted to play for the event were warned off by Cuban authorities and cancelled at the last minute. This unfortunate circumstance affected neither the substance nor the spirit of the celebration, however, which culminated in even more dancing during the cocktail that followed – to recorded music.